

Why it's good to love lava

By Robina Cowan

The hottest new spa treatment around is lava shell massage, so when I discovered that JH Skincare Clinic offers the treatment, I braved a cold winter's day in November to try it for myself with clinic owner Janis Hendrickson.



What is it?

Lava Shell Massage uses tiger clam shells with specialised massage techniques. The beautiful white and coral-coloured tiger shells are an eco-friendly seafood by-product from the South Pacific, where the therapy originated.

Each shell is buffed to a shine which gives a smooth surface to glide over the skin, with the ridged edges working more gnarly muscles if required.

For treatment, they are filled with a 'teabag' of dried natural minerals, sea kelp and algae. Like magic, a salt water solution activates the minerals, adding heat inside the shell to increase the effectiveness of the treatment.

What does it do?

Janis explained that the combination of heat and minerals along with the massage is great for "people who are feeling run down, suffer aches and pains, feel the cold, have muscle tension and soreness. Or simply would benefit the experience of deep relaxation."

Where it differs from hot stone therapy is that the shells retain their heat throughout the treatment, the constant temperature helping to increase blood flow and remove toxins within the cells and ease muscle tension. There is also a lot less noise using the Lava Shell massage as opposed to hot stone therapy: all I could hear was a soothing backdrop of low volume classical music, and my occasional sigh of pleasure.

What's it like?

In a word - wonderful! The temperature is like sinking into a perfect bath; I could feel my body giving a big 'aaah' as the treatment began. Having gone in with the shivers and knotted shoulders, I came out with a smile on my face and a cosy glow.

More information

Now celebrating its fourth birthday, the award-winning JH Skincare Clinic offers a range of non-invasive but effective facial, anti-ageing and skincare treatments and therapies, along with Gatineau and Coffee Berry skincare products and gorgeous True Grace candles, in a peaceful corner at the top of Sydenham.

For bookings, prices and package deals, contact JH Skincare Clinic, 137 Kirkdale, Sydenham SE26 4QJ, 020 8699 1998, www.jhskincareclinic.co.uk.

Gift vouchers are also available, so if you'd like a treat to look forward to in the new year, write 'Hint Hint' on a Post-it note and leave this page open...

Last minute

It's beginning to smell a lot like Christmas...

So, the tree's dressed, carols are playing on the radio - just add the Christmassy scent and let the celebrations begin!

True Grace candles are handmade in England and give a 40 hour burn time, with natural wax scented varieties to match your mood. Presented in soft smoked glass holders, they'll look lovely on your mantelpiece. Individual candles are £24 each, or there's a gift set including mini candles and diffusers at £40, with complimentary gift wrapping available on all orders over £30. Available from JH Skincare Clinic, 137 Kirkdale, Sydenham SE26 4QJ, 020 8699 1998, and online at www.jhskincareclinic.co.uk.



Robo fish

The lifelike Robo Fish are small and intelligent and packed with the latest aquatic, robotic technology.

Drop them in water and they'll swim in five different directions, in a bowl, the kitchen sink or the bath. Then they'll stop when you take them out for a rest. No feeding or cleaning out required, Robo Fish are flying off the shelves, priced £9.99 at Wigwam Toys and Gifts, 109 Rosendale Road SE21 8EZ.

Nutty's party music

How about this for a stocking filler? West Dulwich based Nutty's Children's Parties, owned and run by Danny Nutt, has its own CD so every day can be party time.

The CD features nine catchy, original songs written and performed by Danny, from nine different, much loved characters regularly performed at Nutty's parties. Songs include: *We Are Pirates Today* (The Pirate Dan Song), *Let's All Be Wizards* (The Wizard Dee Song) and many more! For more information on Nutty's Children's Parties or to preview the songs, go to www.nuttyschildrensparties.co.uk.



READER OFFER The CD is usually £8.99, but as a special Christmas offer, you can buy a copy for just £5.99 inc. free p+p. Just email danny@nuttychildrensparties.co.uk and quote 'Nutty's/Families offer' to make your purchase, before the offer ends on 24 December.